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VIETNAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION RELEASES HIGHER EDUCATION UPDATE REPORT

Hanoi, October 31, 2014. The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) is releasing a report entitled ***“Observations on the Current Status of Higher Education in Agricultural Sciences, Civil Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, Environmental Sciences, Physics, and Transport and Communications at Select Universities in Vietnam.”***

As a follow-up to the two earlier VEF reports: (1) ***Observations on Undergraduate Education in Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Physics at Select Universities in Vietnam***, published in August 2006; and (2) ***Observations on the Current Status of Education in the Agricultural Sciences in Vietnam***, published in January 2007, VEF undertook another study on the situation of higher education in STEM fields in Vietnam.

The site visits took place in July of 2013. Eight prominent U.S. professors visited 14 universities in four cities (Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Hanoi, and Thai Nguyen), to identify any changes that have been made in teaching, learning, and research in higher education in Vietnam, specifically in the fields of agricultural sciences, civil engineering, computer science, electrical engineering, environmental sciences, physics, and transport and communications since the initial studies in 2006. Insights and recommendations gleaned from this study should be useful not only to the 14 participating Vietnamese universities, but also to other Vietnamese universities as they work toward improving the quality of education programs in the seven targeted fields, as well as in other fields.

Dr. J. Scott Angle, Dean and Director, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, University of Georgia, noted that “Strengthening the educational ties between the United States and Vietnam is good for both countries. As the Vietnamese educational system grows and matures, the country is poised for higher education to become the economic engine for the future.” While the site visitors have identified a number of recommendations for further development, they have not suggested any priority for their suggestions. Dr. John

Hopcroft, IBM Professor of Engineering and Applied Mathematics, Computer Science Department of Cornell University commented: “Vietnam has made significant progress in improving university education over the past ten years. Because of limited resources it now needs to focus on just a few disciplines that are important to the economy and wellbeing of its citizens and build world class educational programs in these small set of areas. Talent is uniformly distributed across the country and Vietnam needs to insure that high quality opportunities exist across the entire nation.”

Dr. Isaac Silvera, the Thomas Dudley Cabot Professor of the Natural Sciences at Harvard University, Former Chair of the VEF Board of Directors, Research Project Lead, shared that “I am truly grateful to the U.S. professors, 14 participating universities, VEF staff, and various stakeholders for their invaluable time, support, and contribution to this important activity of VEF that helps build capacity for Vietnam.” The online reports in both English and Vietnamese are available at the VEF website: www.vef.gov. “We sincerely hope that the recommendations in this report will be useful to Vietnam as it works toward further improving the higher education system in Vietnam” said Ms. Sandy Dang, VEF Acting Executive Director. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and VEF are hosting a roundtable discussion to report the findings and recommendations for further development of Vietnam higher education on November 3, 2014 in Washington D.C.

VEF is a special initiative enacted by the U.S. Congress to bring the United States and Vietnam closer together through educational exchanges related to science, engineering, mathematics, medicine, and technology. The Foundation is in its eleventh year of operations. Its flagship activity, the VEF Fellowship Program, has placed more than 500 fellows at 96 top-tier U.S. graduate research institutions for master’s and doctoral degrees. Additionally, the Visiting Scholar Program funds Vietnamese doctorate recipients in pursuing postdoctoral programs at U.S. universities for up to 12 months. Under the Visiting Scholar Program, which began in 2007, 46 Vietnamese citizens with doctorates have attended 35 major U.S. universities for self-designed, postdoctoral programs lasting from 5 to 12 months. The newest VEF program is the U.S. Faculty Scholar Grant Program, which began in 2008. Through this program, 39 U.S. Faculty Scholar Grants have been awarded to 31 American professors, enabling them to teach one or two semester courses in English at 26 Vietnamese institutions either on-site in Vietnam or via real-time, interactive video conferencing from the United States. VEF Fellows and Visiting Scholars are required to return to Vietnam after completing their academic programs in the United States.